

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of January 28, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Chris Bradley, Selectmen Brad Denny, Charles Morse, John Quinn III, and Gregory Sanders. Also present were Town Manager Rob Lewis, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Chris Outten (Police Chief), Peter G. DeMasi (Fire Chief/Highway Superintendent), and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Bradley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

V DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

- a. Police Chief Chris Outten.** Chief Outten had provided the Board with a written report beforehand, which he now summarized. He touched upon personnel changes in the Northfield Police Department (NPD), provided statistics for the 2012 calendar year, and discussed suggestions made to "enhance security measures" at the Northfield schools in light of the mass shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School last month. Selectman Morse asked if the NPD conducted "active shooter" training. Chief Outten confirmed that this was the case and added that the Northfield School District allowed the NPD to use its facilities for mock scenarios when classes are in recess. Peter G. DeMasi stated that he had witnessed this training at the school and was very impressed. Chief Outten reported that the NPD officers currently are trained in use of shotguns and handguns; they will be trained in the use of assault rifles (AR-15) this coming spring. Once that training has been completed, protocols will be developed for the use of these weapons, which were purchased with Homeland Security grant money. Chair Bradley stated that the Board had noticed fluctuations in NPD overtime and part-time officer expenses over recent months. Chief Outten stated that the NPD will be fully staffed early next month so these expenses should be reduced. He added that some of these overtime expenses had been associated with after hour training sessions as well as winter holiday coverage.
- b. Fire Chief Peter G. DeMasi.** Chief DeMasi noted a recent increase in calls, with twenty-four (24) so far in January 2013. He then added that the recently purchased aerial ladder truck had been employed during a recent fire at Northfield Wood Products. In fact, this type of fire could not have been handled without an aerial ladder truck. Since this business is up and running today because of this, Chief DeMasi believes that the new truck already has proven to be a good investment.
- c. Highway Superintendent Peter G. DeMasi.** Superintendent DeMasi stated that there were many snow and ice storms already this year, which has resulted in "hits" to the sand and salt budgets. He also stated that the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) program is going forward; there will be a five (5) year plan included in this year's Town Report.

Selectman Quinn then asked about the status of the Fairgrounds Bridge replacement project. Superintendent DeMasi stated that he and Manager Lewis have been in contact with the project engineer and are hoping for a meeting later this week so that the bidding process can begin as soon as possible. This project has required numerous work permits, which has extended the project timeline. Selectman Quinn asked if there was an estimated start date. Superintendent DeMasi said that there was not. Manager Lewis stated that the last permit approval is expected by February 1, 2013. Once this is in hand, every effort will be made to ensure that the project is completed this year. Manager Lewis promised to keep the Board informed as the project develops.

Regarding highway equipment use, Manager Lewis stated that vehicle and maintenance logs are kept for each vehicle that the Board members can review if they choose. Chair Bradley thought that the Highway Committee should look them over first. Superintendent DeMasi had brought a sample log with him as an example. Town Manager Lewis also would like to schedule a tour of the Town Garage facilities (weather permitting) for the Highway Committee.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **January 14, 2013 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Sanders abstaining.**
- b. **January 15, 2013 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Sanders abstaining.**
- c. **January 21, 2013 (Public Hearing & Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #15-13.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve Warrant #15-13 in the amount of \$48,896.31. Selectman Denny noted that there was a warrant payment to him for reimbursement of half the expense of printing the Town/Village Merger Booklets; he asked if he should invoke the Conflict of Interest Ordinance and recuse himself from the warrant discussion and vote. The other Board members did not feel this was necessary since the matter now was in the open. Chair Bradley questioned the cost of the ArcView maintenance agreement. Manager Lewis believed that the amount was correct and in accordance with the Inter-Company Charge policy; he will look into this later to be sure. Chair Bradley also had some questions regarding some legal bills but will discuss these with Manager Lewis at a later time. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through January 20, 2013: \$52,246.15.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$52,246.15. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of 2013 Annual Town Meeting Warning.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve and sign the 2013 Annual Town Meeting Warning as presented by management with the inclusion of the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the 10:00 a.m. open meeting. Selectman Morse then read the warning from beginning to end.

Selectman Denny asked if there would be a Public Hearing held for the Australian Ballot articles (including Town/Village Merger). He was told that the Public Hearing would be held prior to the regular meeting on Monday, February 25, 2013.

Selectman Quinn saw an article requesting \$6000 for the Northfield Boys & Girls Club and asked if the club was currently open. Kathleen Lott stated that the club is now closed but will reopen in February 2013 under the new management of the Washington County Youth Services Bureau. Finance Director Baroffio noted that disbursements of funds approved by the voters at Town Meeting are paid at the end of the fiscal year; if the club doesn't operate for the full year, it will not receive the full amount.

Selectman Denny then asked about Article 10, which seeks voter authorization for the "expenditure of an amount not to exceed twenty-one thousand dollars (\$21,000) to fund twenty percent (20%) of the cost to reestablish the Northfield-Montpelier GMTA Commuter Bus Service." He asked if this figure included any shared contribution from Norwich University, the Town of Berlin, etc. Manager Lewis stated that he is still working on this. Chair Bradley noted that the article clearly indicates that the amount is "not to exceed" the specified figure so any offsetting contributions could be applied to reduce this amount. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Distribution of Town/School Reports.** Manager Lewis stated that the normal practice in recent years has been for the Town and Village Highway crews and the Water/Sewer crew to hand deliver the Town/School Reports to every Northfield household. He stated that this has become a very expensive process and he would like the Board's authorization to instead make copies of the report available for pick up at various locations around town, such as the Municipal Building, the Brown Public Library, local banks, businesses, etc. Selectman Morse stated that this was done once in recent years when the Highway crew was too occupied with bad snowstorms to make the doorstep deliveries. He felt that if it generated sufficient cost savings, it might be worth an experiment. Selectman Denny noted that copies of the Town/Village Merger booklet have been distributed at various locations and have been disappearing. Selectman Quinn asked how long it took to deliver the reports. Mr. DeMasi said it took about seven (7) hours if the full Highway and Water/Sewer crews helped out. Selectman Quinn believes that doorstep delivery is a useful service as it results in residents being better informed for the Town Meeting voting. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to authorize Town Manager Lewis to decide whether or not the Town/School Reports will be hand-delivered (depending on the weather and other factors). Selectman Denny believes that with sufficient advertising beforehand, residents will be aware and willing to pick up the reports themselves. Selectman Quinn noted that there are 1800 households in Northfield and he still is concerned that residents in the outlying areas of the community will be put at a disadvantage. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Ratification of General Policy and Procedures for Management.** Chair Bradley noted that this policy had been approved by the Select Board last year but not formally signed. Motion by Selectman Quinn, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve and sign the General Policy and Procedures for Management. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. One-House Roads and the Class 4 Roads and Trails Policy.** Manager Lewis believes that based upon his experience in other Vermont towns, it is out of the ordinary that Northfield maintains at public expense roads with only one house. There now are at least twenty-one (21) of these maintained one-house roads. Although this probably will be a controversial topic, he noted that the cost of grading these roads twice a year and providing snow plowing adds one cent (1¢) to the Town Tax Rate. He would like to know if the Board would like to further explore this matter, including the possibility of reclassifying these as Class 4 Roads. When the snow plowing of these one-house roads was put out to bid and then awarded to a private contractor, the cost was \$29,000 for the winter. Chair Bradley stated that this is an old issue that previous Boards have been reluctant to address; perhaps this Board should explore this matter and, if warranted, take action. It was noted that there is a procedure in place, beginning with property owner notification and site visit, should the Town decide to reclassify a road. Selectman Morse felt that the Town should develop an "White Paper" that specifies the various steps required; the roads that should be under consideration for reclassification; the amount that Northfield receives from the State to maintain these roads and whether it covers maintenance costs; etc. He added that some homeowners may want their roads privatized (i.e., "thrown up") rather than reclassified since the reclassification would still allow for public access to the road. Perhaps part of the "White Paper" would specify that the Town would only seek change of road status when the property changes hands. Selectman Quinn stated that this was the attitude of the Highway Committee when this issue was discussed at its last meeting (12/07/12), as it was felt that it would be unfair to penalize the current homeowner. Selectman Morse felt that any chance for saving taxpayer money should be explored. Motion by Selectman Bradley, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to authorize Manager Lewis to collect additional information regarding one-house roads and possible revision of the current Class 4 Roads and Trails Policy. Selectman Denny asked if homeowners could seek property tax reappraisals if their access roads were no longer publically maintained. Selectman Morse does not believe that this is possible (based upon what he previously learned as Town Manager). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

e. Status Reports: Various Projects.

- 1. Economic Development Committee update.** Selectman Denny stated that the meeting held last week (01/23/13) was very productive. Representatives from GO Northfield were present and made valuable contributions to the discussion. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 20, 2013 with additional elements of the community asked to attend. Chair Bradley added that the issues discussed at the meeting included various economic development proposals in Northfield (including Vermont Yesteryear); possible revisions of the current tax stabilization policy; suggested businesses to occupy the vacant storefronts around the downtown area; etc.

IX. MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. Status Reports: Various Projects.** Manager Lewis had provided the Board with a written report before the meeting.
 - 1. Medical Marijuana Dispensaries and Wind Power.** Selectman Morse noted that in Manager Lewis' written report, he had recommended a pro-active approach on both these issues. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to put these concerns on the agenda when the Town Selectmen hold their next Joint Board Meeting with the Village Trustees. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items. There was none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were revised and approved by the Town Selectmen at their meeting of February 11, 2013.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.